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GREAT BRITAIN.

Report from Edinburgh—Plague in Leith—Circulars of instruction relative to precautions against spread.

Consul Fleming reports, May 17, as follows:

Bubonic plague, believed to have been imported by rats from a foreign vessel arriving at the docks, was discovered in a tenement in Leith last week. A man and his wife and their 2 children were suffering from the disease. They were immediately removed to the Isolation Hospital. The man died on the 11th instant. The 3 patients in the hospital are to-day reported by the health officer of Leith to be better. No fresh case of plague has occurred among the other occupants of the tenement, about 30 in number, who were sent to the Reception House upon the discovery of the disease, and there is now no fear that it will spread.

The most energetic precautionary measures were adopted by the health officer. In addition to the disinfection and closing of the tenement where the fatal case occurred, the common passages and other parts of the adjacent tenements were disinfected, precautions were taken in connection with the shipping at the port, and measures adopted for the destruction of rats in the tenements and at the docks. As the circulars of instruction, etc., issued by the health officer may be of interest, I herewith inclose copies.

The local government board of Scotland, in terms of the International Sanitary Convention of Paris of 1903, has to-day announced that the port and burgh of Leith have ceased to be regarded as infected with plague.

No vessel has left the port of Leith for an American port since April 25.

[Inclosures.]

Circulars.

I.

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICE, *Leith*, May 12, 1905.

IMPORTANT AND URGENT—PLAGUE.

The existence of plague in Leith has now been confirmed, the local government board of Scotland having been informed of the fact.

I would therefore impress upon you the need to instruct that fenders be placed on all ropes or cables connecting vessels with the quays; also that all gangways be withdrawn from the quays every night. These precautions are necessary to prevent rats gaining access to any ships from the shore.

In order to prevent undue delays in the examination of passengers and crews of departing vessels, I should feel obliged to you to instruct the hoisting of the Blue Peter twelve hours before sailing. This will enable my staff to observe which vessels are leaving the port.

WM. ROBERTSON, M. D., D. P. H.,
Medical Officer of Health.

II.

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICE, *Leith*, May 13, 1905.

PLAGUE—THE DESTRUCTION OF RATS.

The committee on health invite the careful attention of owners and occupiers to the following memorandum, and their cooperation in the measures suggested for dealing with rats:

Extension of plague at the present time is to be met—

(1) By wholesale destruction of rats;

(2) By their exclusion from dwellings, warehouses, and places of business generally, and by the destruction of their haunts and feeding places in the vicinity of dwellings.

To be effective the effort must be general, and strict watch should be kept for the appearance of rats in places not presently infested by them.

Rats gain access to buildings chiefly—

(1) By burrowing through the earth below wooden flooring.

(2) Along the course of drainage and other pipes led through main walls in holes which are too large.

(3) By badly fitting doors, doors broken at the foot, and other openings on ground floors.

This is to be met—

(1) By cementing or asphaltting earthen basements where these are burrowed.

(2) By packing loosely fitting holes through which drain or other pipes pass.

(3) By refitting doorways, protecting the foot if necessary with sheet iron, and by wire netting openings in basements which can not otherwise be dealt with. Rat runs in buildings should be discovered and destroyed.

It is useless to stop rat holes in a house and leave the means of access to the tenement still open. Rats overrun a building behind the plaster and woodwork, in the casing of pipes, and below flooring, but they gain access at the basement.

Rat-infested premises may be dangerous to the health of the tenants and a menace to their neighbors. Landlords are requested at once to inquire into the presence of rats in their properties and to take action on the above, or on similar lines.

Rats are attracted to buildings in search of food.

Ash pits, collections of garbage, stable yards, etc., afford them food; lumber heaps or disused structures are suitable for nesting.

There is much unnecessary pollution of back courts by tenants throwing domestic refuse over windows which ought to be put into the ash bin. All household refuse should, as far as possible, be burned by the householder.

The local authority rely on the willing cooperation of landlords and householders in these directions, and tenants will forward the work of repression by informing the sanitary department of premises which are rat infested.

To destroy rats.—Trapping and poisoning are the most readily available; hunting with dogs, ferrets, or a mongoose is sometimes practicable, but they can rarely follow the rat into its burrow.

Trapping.—The most useful form of trap is a spring trap, baited with ham. Cage traps are too large, and the rat soon learns to avoid them.

Poisoning.—It is frequently objected that poisoned animals return to their burrows and die there, and that, if these are under floors, smells arise. But the discovery and destruction of rat runs is at the moment important, and should be placed against the temporary inconvenience. Some form of arsenic or phosphorous paste is to be preferred. There is no available poison which will preserve the dead rat from putrefaction and prevent smell.

Mice and cats may acquire the disease, but rats are the chief carriers.

WM. ROBERTSON, M. D., D. P. H.,
Medical Officer of Health.

III.

[Circular to shipping agents.]

PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT,
Leith, May 15, 1905.

PARIS CONVENTION—PREVENTION OF PLAGUE—OUTGOING SHIPS.

DEAR SIR: In terms of the Paris Convention (Cap. II, Sec. II), ships leaving the port of Leith at the present time, and in which no case of plague has occurred before or during the voyage, are to be regarded as "healthy" ships, and as such are entitled to free pratique at the port of arrival, subject to—

(1) Medical inspection.

(2) Medical supervision of passengers and crew (not necessarily at the port of debarkation) until five days have elapsed since leaving Leith; formerly the period was ten days.

(3) Disinfection of soiled linen and personal effects of passengers and crew.

(4) Pumping out bilge water.

(5) Measures directed against destruction of rats.

For the purpose of shortening the time required for the disinfection required under items 3 and 5, or in the event of no case occurring during the voyage of rendering such disinfection unnecessary, the public health department of Leith is prepared—

- (1) To medically inspect the officers, crew, and passengers of all outgoing ships.
- (2) To inspect and where necessary disinfect the articles above specified immediately before sailing, and to certify accordingly; and
- (3) To deal with rat destruction.

SUSCEPTIBLE ARTICLES.

(Chapter II, Section II)

ART. 11. No article of merchandise is in itself capable of conveying plague or cholera. Merchandise becomes dangerous only when contaminated by plague or cholera products.

ART. 12. Only such merchandise and things as the local sanitary authority considers infected may be subjected to disinfection. Provided always that the merchandise or things hereinafter specified may be subjected to disinfection or their importation may even be prohibited, irrespective of any evidence as to whether or not they are infected: (1) Body linen, wearing apparel, bedding that has been in use. But when these things are carried as baggage, or in consequence of a change of abode (household goods), their importation may not be prohibited, but they shall be dealt with as prescribed in article 19. Soldiers' and sailors' kits, returned to their country after their death, are to be regarded as of the nature of the things specified in the first sentence of (1) this article. (2) Rags—save in the case of cholera—compressed and carried in bound bales as merchandise in bulk. The importation of the following articles may not be prohibited: Fresh waste derived directly from spinning, weaving, making up, or bleaching establishments; artificial wools (Kunstwolle, shoddy), and new paper clippings.

ART. 13. The transit of the merchandise and things specified in (1) and (2) of the foregoing article may not be prohibited if they are packed so that they can not be manipulated on the way. Similarly, when such merchandise and things have been so conveyed that they can not have come into contact with contaminated articles on the way, their transit through an infected local area must not hinder their importation into the country to which they are consigned.

ART. 14. Importation of the merchandise and things specified in (1) and (2) of article 12 shall not be prohibited if it be proved to the authority of the country to which they are consigned that they were dispatched not less than five days before the commencement of the epidemic.

ART. 15. It rests with the authority of the country to which the merchandise and things are consigned to decide in what manner and at what place disinfection shall be carried out, and what shall be the methods adopted to secure destruction of rats. These operations must be performed in such fashion as to injure articles as little as possible. It rests with each State to settle questions of consequent compensation for damage caused by measures of disinfection or of rat destruction. If, on account of measures taken to secure destruction of rats on board ship, charges are levied by the sanitary authority, either directly or indirectly through a company or a private person, the rates of these charges must be in accordance with a tariff made public beforehand, and so drawn up that the State or the sanitary authority shall, on the whole, derive no profit from its application.

ART. 19. *Baggage*.—Soiled linen, clothing, and articles carried as baggage or as household goods, from a local area declared to be infected, shall undergo disinfection only in those instances where the sanitary authority considers them infected.

(Section III.)

ART. 23. In the case of plague, healthy ships shall be given free pratique immediately, whatever their bill of health may be. The only measures which the authority of the port of arrival may take as regards these ships are the following:

- (1) Medical inspection.
- (2) Disinfection of soiled linen, wearing apparel, and other articles belonging to the crew and passengers, but only in exceptional instances, when the sanitary authority has special reasons for regarding them as infected.
- (3) The sanitary authority may subject ships from an infected port to a process intended to secure destruction of rats on board, either before or after discharge of cargo, although this measure must not be resorted to as a general rule. This process

must be carried out as soon as possible, and, in any case, must not take longer than twenty-four hours, and so as to avoid damage to merchandise and to the ship's plating and engines, and also so as not to interfere with the coming and going of passengers and crew between ship and shore. In the case of ships in ballast, the process, if there be occasion for it, shall be carried out as soon as possible, and, in any case, before taking cargo.

If a ship from an infected port has been subjected to measures of rat destruction, these can not be repeated unless the ship has called at an infected port and has there brought up to the quay, or unless sick or dead rats are found on board.

The crew and passengers may be subjected to surveillance during a period which shall not exceed five days, reckoned from the date on which the ship left the infected port. The crew may, during the same period, be prevented from leaving the ship except on duty.

The competent authority at the port of arrival may, in all cases, exact a certificate, given on oath, from the doctor of the ship, or, in his default, from the captain, testifying that there has not been a case of plague on board since departure, and that unusual mortality among rats has not been observed.

RATS.

Rats may transmit the disease from one port to another, and in some foreign ports—Constantinople, for example—it is required that ships arriving from contaminated ports must possess a certificate that rats were destroyed before loading.

Continuous effort should be made to destroy rats on board ship, and it is probable that any ship carrying a mongoose would rapidly become rat-free. Short of this, their destruction is most readily accomplished by sulphur fumigation when the holds are empty.

The public health department is also prepared to direct and supervise the fumigation of ships with this view, and to certify accordingly.

In order that effect may be given to the foregoing proposals, intimation should be sent to the medical officer of health of the berth at which the ship is lying, and in the case of outgoing ships the probable hour of sailing should be stated.

I am, yours truly,

WM. ROBERTSON, M. D., D. P. H.,
Medical Officer of Health.

GUATEMALA.

Report from Livingston, fruit port.

Acting Assistant Surgeon Peters reports as follows: Week ended May 13, 1905: Present officially estimated population, 3,500; no deaths reported; prevailing diseases, malarial; general sanitary condition of this port and the surrounding country during the week, good.

Bills of health were issued to the following-named vessels:

Date.	Vessel.	Number of crew.	Number of passengers from this port.	Number of passengers in transit.	Pieces of baggage disinfected.
May 9	Anselm	41	6	0	0
11	Spero	18	0	0	0
10	Nicaragua	18	0	0	0

The steamships *Anselm* and *Nicaragua* cleared from Puerto Barrios.

HONDURAS.

Report from Ceiba, fruit port.

Acting Assistant Surgeon Robertson reports as follows: Week ended May 13, 1905. Present officially estimated population, about 4,000; 2 deaths; prevailing diseases, malarial; general sanitary condition of this port and the surrounding country during the week, good.